NEW
NICK CARTER
WEEKLY

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A DEAD MAN'S POWER

OR THE MYSTERY OF A TELEPHONE NUMBER

BY THE AUTHOR OF "NICK CARTER"

The three men leaped to their feet in amazemen when two strangers suddenly appeared in the open door, and with revolvers aimed at their heads, demanded that they throw up their hands.

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A DEAD MAN'S POWER

OR,

The Mystery of a Telephone Number.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

A MESSAGE FROM THE UNKNOWN.

The telephone bell rang with sudden violence, and Nick Carter leaped from his bed and put the receiver against his ear.

"Hello!" he said; but he got no further than that. Somebody was already talking into the transmitter at the other end of the wire.

"If you are Nick Carter," said the voice, "you will understand. If you are not Nick Carter, for God's sake send word to him at once. Tell him exactly what I say. Don't interrupt me. I am dying. I may not be able to finish what I have to say. This is mur——"

The voice ceased, and, after waiting a moment in vain for a repetition of the sounds, Nick shouted another hello over the wire.

There was no immediate reply, but as the detective listened intently, he could hear a low scraping, rustling sound, just as if some person at the other end of the phone were endeavoring to get near enough to the transmitter to speak again.

Then, in a moment more, he heard the voice a second time, only now it was much weaker, so that the words were barely intelligible.

"I heard you," said the voice. "I nearly fainted from weakness, but I heard you. I know that you are Nick Carter. Thank God for that. Don't interrupt me, even if I hesitate between my words. I am dying."

The reader must understand that these words were uttered only in jerks; that an interval of time elapsed after every one of them, before the succeeding one was uttered, and that they came in gasps that were husky

and breathless—that were hoarse almost to the point of being unintelligible.

Indeed, many of the words were whispered; others were shouted into the transmitter, as if the dying man at the other end of the wire were straining every energy that was left in him to complete the message he had to give before he breathed his last.

Even the voice itself was unrecognizable.

Nick Carter realized thoroughly that it belonged to some person who was well known to him, but the huskiness of the tones, the intervals between the words—the occasional hoarse and almost vociferous words—all these rendered it utterly impossible for him to recognize the owner of the voice.

He longed to interrupt the message with short, sharp and pointed questions, but his trained ear told him that to do so would be fatal to the wishes of the man at the other end—to the desires of the man who was attempting, with all the strength there was left in him, to convey his dying message into the ears of the detective.

He realized fully that there was only one way for him to proceed.

He must hear all that he could hear, and make the most of what he did hear.

He must get all the information he could, and make the most of what he received, relying solely upon that to direct him in his future movements.

But, nevertheless, he longed to shout through the transmitter:

"Who are you?" "Where are you?" "Who attacked you?" And there were a hundred other questions he would have asked had he dared to do so.

As it was, he only waited and listened—waited during intervals which seemed interminable whenever the voice lapsed into silence, and listened with all the eagerness he possessed whenever the words came over the wire.

No effort will be made here to reproduce the words in the manner in which they were uttered. We will only seek to give the words themselves, for that is all that the detective had to guide him in the work which he performed after it was over, and there came no further utterances over the wire.

The voice continued:

"I remember entering my coupé. Then I knew no more until I found myself here. I don't know who they were. They were masked and cloaked. I could not recognize any of them. There were three. I don't know where I am. I crawled across the floor to this telephone. Never mind how I finally reached it. Perhaps Central can help you to trace it, and so tell you where it is. I think I am in the house of——"

The name uttered here was entirely unintelligible, and Nick dared not interrupt to ask that it be repeated. Then the voice continued:

"——but he is dead. Still it may be his house just the same. Do you suppose he could have plotted so well that he could have me murdered even after he had been dead himself, so long a time?"

There was another interval of silence; and then:

"There is no use in crying out for vengeance when one is dying; and I am almost dead. I shall continue to talk to you as long as I have strength to utter a word. I don't want to die, Carter; I am not ready to die. There are a thousand reasons why I should live, and there is not one good one why I should die—now.

"Yes; there is one. I have been——"

Again the words were garbled so that they could not be understood.

It seemed indeed as if every time when the dying man touched upon a part of his story, which would be of assistance to the detective, his own eagerness to be understood rendered it impossible for him to utter the important words.

"It was last night," he continued. "Seven o'clock. I left the office and entered my cab. I stayed at the office very late; later than I ever did before. Once I thought of telephoning for you to come down and go home with me—or to send one of your assistants, but I thought it foolish.

"I wish now that I had done so. I think I must have had a premonition of what was to happen. I left the office at seven. My cab was at the door. My own

cab—at least, I thought it was mine. Anyhow, I entered it.

"There might have been somebody inside the cab when I entered it. I don't know. I do not really remember entering it at all; only that I opened the door and gave a word of instruction to the driver. Then I stepped inside, I think, but that is the last I recall.

"Then I found myself here—in this room.

"I wish I could tell you where it is, or whose room it is. I cannot. I do not know. It is elegantly furnished; sumptuously furnished; better than anything I have in my own house, and that is considerable, as you know.

"I opened my eyes and found myself here.

"There were three men in the room with me. They were seated at a table in the middle of the room. I was on a couch in one corner of the room.

"The men were talking together in low tones. I could not hear what they were saying. I did not hear a word, although I strained my ears to hear. It was impossible. They mumbled their words, or else my hearing was impaired. Doubtless that was it.

"I tried to rise, but I could not. I seemed strangely weak. I was not bound, or fastened in any way, and yet it seemed as if a giant were holding me down—as if a mammoth hand were pressed upon my brow, holding me so that I could not move—as if I were in a plaster cast which coerced me on every side at once.

"Then I discovered that I was bleeding. I knew, somehow, that the bleeding was responsible for my weakness. I knew then why I was dying, and why I could not move. I was bleeding to death.

"It was that discovery which enabled me to live until now—to send this message to you.

"I managed, after a time, to press my thumb against the wound. In that way I stopped the bleeding enough to live yet a little while longer. I wonder that I had the strength to do it.

"Presently the men stopped talking. They came across the room and looked at me. They did not touch me. I am glad of that, for if they had done so they would have discovered that I had stopped the bleeding, for a time at least, and that I was not dead.

"The men said nothing while they stood there beside me. They uttered no word. There were three of them. They all wore cape cloaks over their shoulders; men's opera coats they were, such as are worn over dress suits. They were all exactly alike. The men wore their hats also. Opera hats. Crush hats. All exactly alike.

"Over their faces they each wore a half mask; white ones they were, with drapery for the lower half. I could not see their features at all. I have no idea whether they were young or old.

"They were all about the same height; about my height, I should say. They were well-built, muscular-looking men, neither fat nor lean, neither tall nor short.

"When they crossed the room to my side and looked down at me, they paused there only a moment. Then they went out of the room through a door that was behind me, so that I could not see them go. But I could hear them. I heard them open the door, and I heard them close it after them. I heard the key turn in the lock, so I knew they had fastened the door after them; and I knew, by the same means, that they took the key away with them.

"After that, I heard nothing. Not a sound came to disturb me.

"It was evident to me that they thought I was dead; and I might as well have been dead, it seemed to me.

"For a long time I held my thumb pressed against the wound, and it seemed as if my strength partially returned. I studied the room, for the men had left all the electric lights burning.

"Then I discovered this telephone on the table where they had been seated. I knew if I could get to it I could call you.

"I have no idea how long it required for me to accomplish it. It seemed years. That giant's hand was still holding me down. It was terrible, the weight which seemed to oppress me; but I rolled from the couch to the floor. I rolled across the floor, an inch at a time. There must be a trail of blood where I did it, for I could not hold my thumb on the wound all the time, and every time I removed it the blood came, and I grew weaker.

"But at last I got here, close to the table.

"It was terrible work to reach the phone then. Every effort I made weakened me so much more. But it is a desk phone. One that you can pick up in your hand.

"At last I managed to knock it to the floor. It fell near to me, so that I rolled over close to it. I could not raise the receiver to my ear at first. Then, I managed to do so, long enough to ask for your number and to get it. Then I heard your hello; and then I think I fainted for a moment. The receiver rolled away from me, and I cannot reach it. I do not even know if you are listening to me at this moment. I could not hear you if you spoke to me now, for the receiver is out of my reach, and the transmitter is lying on the floor beside me where I can talk into it without touching it.

"I am praying with all my heart that you do hear me.

"You see how utterly useless it would be for you to ask me questions, because I could not hear them if you did so; but I pray God that you hear me.

"I cannot stop the bleeding entirely. I am growing weaker every moment; but I will continue to talk as long as I can.

"Presently, I suppose, the men will return. They will find me here on the floor with the telephone transmitter close beside me, but with the receiver so far out of my reach that it is possible they will not think I have been able to send a message.

"I hope Central is listening also. You must find out who Central is, and, perhaps, she—or he, as the case may be—will be able to help you in finding where this message came from. And, Central, if you do hear, you must find Nick Carter and tell him all I have said; and if the men who brought me here to this room should ask you if I have talked over the phone, you must say that I did not. Say that the receiver was down, but that you heard no voice. They must have no clew that Nick Carter is after them.

"I am getting weak very fast now. I can scarcely speak at all. I wonder if I can be heard at all? I doubt it.

"Good-by, Carter, if you hear me. I shall be dead now in a few minutes.

"I can hear the men coming back, even now. My ear is against the floor, you know, and I hear their tread outside the room. In a moment I will hear the key in the lock. When I do I will stop, for they must not know that I—— There it is! Good-by."

Nick Carter strained his ear to hear then, and he did hear a sharp exclamation in a heavy, masculine voice; and he heard a heavy tread cross a carpeted floor, somewhere; then an oath; then the noise of some one raising the receiver and transmitter from the floor; then a heavy breathing, as if somebody were listening—and then a sharp click as the receiver was hung up at the other end.

CHAPTER II.

THE MYSTERY OF A TELEPHONE NUMBER.

When the telephone bell rang and Nick Carter leaped from his bed to reply to it, he did two things that were almost mechanical—he pressed the white button which switched on the electric lights in his room, and he glanced at the face of the great, colonial clock which stood in one corner of his bedchamber.

The hands of the clock pointed twelve minutes past two A.M., when he took the receiver in his hand, and they pointed at twelve minutes past three when he heard the sharp click at the other end which announced, as plainly as words could have done, that the three men who had been so indefinitely described to him in the remarkable message had returned to the room where their victim was slowly bleeding to death; that they had discovered him on the floor with the telephone beside him, and that they had hung up the receiver instantly.

It will be understood, therefore, that a message, which under ordinary circumstances might have been transmitted over the wire in ten or fifteen minutes, under the most adverse circumstances, had occupied exactly an hour.

Stop and think how slowly the words of the message from the dying man must have been uttered to consume an hour in their transmission; try to realize, also, the infinite patience of the detective, who was compelled to receive them thus slowly.

Picture, if you can, the dying man, crawling laboriously across the floor to the table whereon the telephone rested; the effort he made to knock it from the table to the floor; his elation when he received a reply from Central, and was connected with the telephone in Nick Carter's house; his delight when he heard the voice of the detective utter that hello; his despair when he fainted again, and the receiver rolled out of his reach, and his consternation when he found that he had not sufficient strength to recover it.

Picture, if you can, his hope that the detective was still listening, and his patience, as he was dying by inches, in relating all that he could of the circumstances which surrounded him.

You have heard all that Nick Carter was able to hear. You know as much about the case now as he knew then.

Put yourself in his place. What would you have done at that moment, when the voice ceased, and you knew that the murderers, or, at least, one of them, had returned to the room, had discovered what their victim had been doing, and had instantly closed the receiver so that nothing might be heard outside that room of what occurred within it after that?

What would you have done?

Would you instantly have called up the central office and made inquiries concerning the connection at the other end? Doubtless. Most people would have done that very thing.

Not so Nick Carter.

He did exactly the opposite.

He remained perfectly silent and still; with his ear against the receiver, listening intently.

He waited with all patience. He thought that Central might have heard all that he had heard himself; but he also thought that the men in the room, where their victim had used the phone so expertly, would presently make an effort to find out if he had succeeded, as we know he had.

Then, after a few moments, while he waited, a clear, feminine voice said:

"Hello!"

"Hush!" replied Nick. "You are Central?"

"Yes."

"Did you hear all that was said to me?"

"Yes, sir. Every word. It was——"

"Hush! Say nothing about it now. Say nothing to anybody. You will be called from that other house in a moment. Tell them nothing—nothing whatever, save that there was no call, if they ask that question. Then when you are through, call me again."

"All right, sir. Hush! Here they are now."

Nick's telephone was cut out then; he hung up the receiver and waited.

After a period of five or six minutes, his bell rang again.

"Hello!" said the same voice.

"Hello, Central," replied Nick. "You again?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"It was as you said."

"Very good. You gave them no satisfaction?"

"No."

"What did you say?"

"They wished to know if I had taken a call from that wire in the last hour."

"And what did you say?"

"I told them no. I said the receiver was taken off there, but that I could get no reply when I asked what number was wanted."

"Good. What then?"

"The voice said all right. That was all."

"Good! Excellent! Please tell me your name."

"Madge Babbington."

"Thank you. It is now half-past three o'clock."

"Yes."

"What time are you off duty?"

"At seven."

"Will you forego your breakfast and your sleep for once, and come directly to me as soon as you are at liberty?"

"Certainly, sir."

"You know where to find me?"

"Yes, sir."

"You should be here by half-past seven."

"Surely as soon as that, sir."

"I will expect you. I will be waiting at the door for you."

"I will be there."

"And, in the meantime, you will say nothing to any person whatever, about anything that has happened or that has been said?"

"I will say nothing till I see you, sir."

"Thank you."

"I will be glad to be of assistance, sir. It is so horrible, all of it."

"Are you frightened? Are you nervous?" asked Nick.

"It has been a shock to me. Otherwise, I am all right."

"All right. Now, just one thing more."

"Yes, sir."

"I will wait here at the phone. I wish you would find out the street and number of the house where that telephone is located, and, as soon as you can do so, call me up again and tell me what it is. You can find out, can't you?"

"I think so."

"And it will not take you very long?"

"It ought not."

"Then you will call me as soon as you know?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right. I will wait here at the phone."

And he did wait; but half an hour elapsed before his bell rang again. Then:

"It is very strange, sir," said Central. "I don't think I ought to explain it over the phone to you. I doubt if I could make myself understood; but I cannot give you the street and number."

"Tell me why not."

"Because the number which appeared to be in use has been out of service for a month. There is no instrument at all at that address, and has not been for a long time. I will explain it to you when I go to see you at seven-thirty."

"Very good. We will have to wait till then; but it is as I suspected—that is, half suspected. You won't fail me at seven-thirty?"

"No, sir."

CHAPTER III.

WHO WAS THE MAN?

It may seem to the reader that Nick Carter showed remarkable patience at the delay that was necessary in waiting four hours for the interview with the telephone girl before he could hope to get any direct clew regarding the location of the phone from which the strange message had come to him.

The detective, however, had learned very early in his experience that slow and sure method was always infinitely better than impulsive precipitation in matters of tracing crime.

The network of wires over the great city of New York is amazing; the number of telephones in daily use is astounding, and to trace a particular call to a certain house is not always as simple as it would seem to be.

In the ordinary course of events, if there is a call upon your phone, you may, by requesting the information of the central office, or of the manager in charge there, ascertain from what telephone number the call came to you. After that, it is an easy matter to discover the street and number of the house where that particular telephone is located.

But I wonder if my readers have any idea of the number of telephones there are in daily use in a great city like New York?

There are hundreds of telephones among the houses and offices of men of affairs, where the number does not appear in the telephone directory at all; and there are, also, from day to day, never existing very long at a time, but, nevertheless, existing until they are discovered or their usefulness is passed, telephones of which the company itself has no cognizance until something occurs to betray them to the girl or the man on duty at the central office.

Nick Carter was, of course, thoroughly familiar with these conditions. He more than once had occasion to

seek out the mysterious source of a telephone call where there could be no record found in the office of the source of that call.

On this particular night—or, rather, early morning—while he listened to the harrowing tale which came to his ears in such a mysterious manner, he was also thinking.

He pieced together, bit by bit, between the pauses and the lapses in the tale that was told to him, much that his informant left out by reason of his eagerness, his anxiety, and his pain.

He read, so to speak, between the lines of that tale.

The condition was something as follows:

A gentleman had remained at his office much later than was his custom.

He had, in fact, not departed from his office until about seven o'clock in the evening, which was doubtless, at least, two hours after his clerks had departed, and, doubtless, also, long after the section of the city in which that particular office was located was deserted—for business purposes.

At the door he had entered, as he supposed, his own coupé. The man had said that much in his message, so, without doubt, it was in fact his own coupé, but with a stranger substituted for the driver.

It would seem also that some person was waiting inside the coupé for him to appear; a person who was waiting to carry out the very details of a plan already hatched, which had now, alas, been consummated.

On entering the cab, he was seized and chloroformed, or he was struck on the head from behind; at all events he was in some manner rendered instantly senseless, for he could remember nothing save that he went to his cab; he could not recall getting into it.

Next, he was driven away to some place which had been prepared to receive him—which had been made ready for his reception; and that place—that room—we have already heard described.

It would seem, according to the story told by the dying man, that it was a room which belonged to some person of taste, and with sufficient money to carry out his ideas of decoration; but, above all, it was quite evidently a place where there would be no fear of interruption, and from which the dead body of a man might easily be removed without fear of detection.

Now there was a table in the center of that room and a couch in one corner. That much was known to the detective while he listened; hence the room was not a small one; doubtless it was more than ordinarily large.

Upon the table in the center of the room there was a hand telephone, consisting of a receiver and a transmitter, but it was unlikely that this telephone was one which was in general use, for the reason that a room so equipped would not have been the one selected for the uses to which that one had been put; another room than that would have been chosen; for, without doubt, there were many other rooms in a house sufficiently large to contain that one.

Again, it is doubtful if the three men mentioned in the message supposed their victim to be quite dead when they went out of the room and left him alone there, and if a regular telephone had been on the table in that room, they would have thought of it before they left him. The fact that they left it at all, and their victim still alive, where he might reach it, was proof that it had not occurred to them that he could do so, and had it been an instrument in regular use, that thought would have occurred to them.

In short, they had simply forgotten the existence of the telephone, just as a pistol which had been left unloaded in one of the drawers of that table for years might have been forgotten in the same way—because it was considered useless.

The telephone was, therefore, to them, the same as an unloaded pistol.

These are samples of the thoughts and conjectures which coursed through the mind of the detective while he listened to the murdered man's tale. We will discover later how truly he reasoned.

It is always well to bear in mind, when we think of the exact methods of reasoning employed by Nick Carter, that he was constantly in practice.

If you, reader, followed his business and were every day of your life engaged upon it, you might in time

become almost as expert a reasoner as he was, and is. It is practice which brings success in any vocation.

The great pitcher of a baseball team is of little or no account in the spring, before he has trained his muscles to do the work expected of them. The greatest pianist in the world would soon become unable to perform simple compositions on his chosen instrument if he ceased to practice.

Nick Carter never ceased to practice his profession; he was accustomed every day of his life to reasoning out problems which would have seemed impossible of solution to another, and in the line of his business and his duty everything had its own particular meaning, as surely as the pitcher in the box knows that a certain position of his fingers coupled with an experienced twist of his wrist, will impart a certain curve to the ball he throws.

There was nothing uncanny or mysterious about Nick Carter's methods. It was always with him the simple process of adding two and two together in order to produce four.

He knew perfectly well, while he listened to the tale that was told him over the wire, that he must perform the work that was to come without more information than the dying man could give him, and he listened with an intensity which burned every word he heard into his brain as if it were branded there; and every word he heard meant a thousand times more to him than the mere word itself.

His first care, then, when he spoke to Central, after the tale was finished, was to make sure that there would be no leakage of what he or she said to the other end of the wire, that end from which the tale of murder had come.

His next was to assure himself that Central would not talk. Upon her silence, until he should give her permission to speak, depended a large part of the success of his plan of operation, upon which he had decided before the wounded man had completed his story.

His third was to make certain a personal interview with that girl in charge of the wire, for upon her he depended for the information which would make it possible for him to seek, in the right quarter, other information which was quite as necessary.

Without herself being aware of it, perhaps, he knew that she did possess certain information of inestimable value to him in his future work.

Now, all that being accomplished, he sought for a reply to the question which you, my reader, would have sought first; he asked her if she could tell him the street and number of the house where that other telephone was located.

If she could have done so, there was still time for him to make all the effort he cared to in that direction; but as we have already seen, he did not believe that she could give him that information, for the reasons he had already deduced.

That he was correct, we know.

Through it all, the point which was most puzzling and most annoying to him, was the one fact that he could not at all place the voice which talked to him.

That voice had been husky with weakness, and hoarse with agony; if not with the agony of physical pain, then, at least, with the agony of knowing that death was at hand.

That voice both whispered and shouted to him. It sank to tones which were almost indistinguishable, and it rose at times to the point of a halloo. It ground out guttural sounds which conveyed no meaning whatever to his listening ear, and again it enunciated words with clear distinctness; but always there was that element of weakness and that effort to make itself understood which effectually destroyed its naturalness.

He had not recognized it at all.

He had not been able to separate a sound of it which suggested any other voice he had ever heard, although he knew that the words were uttered by a person who was well known to him.

But who was the man?

Evidently a person situated so that he owned his own private coupé; but Nick Carter was acquainted with thousands of such.

Evidently a man who maintained an office which closed for the day early in the afternoon; but Nick Carter knew thousands of such.

Evident a man of unusual courage, and a man of affairs; but such men were legion among Nick Carter's acquaintances.

"Who was the man?" Nick asked himself over and over again. "Shall I go over the list of all my acquaintances in the effort to determine that question, or shall I quietly wait till morning and see what the new day brings forth in the way of disappearances?"

He leaned back in his chair lost in thought, while the minute hand of the clock traveled slowly round and round the dial, but he could supply no adequate answer to that all-absorbing question:

"Who was the man?"

CHAPTER IV.

A CASE FOR AN EXPERT LINEMAN.

Madge Babbington, the telephone girl, arrived at Nick Carter's house at twenty minutes after seven o'clock, and discovered that he was awaiting her, for he came to the door and opened it before she had opportunity to touch the electric button to summon him.

"Miss Babbington?" he asked. "I am grateful to you for your promptness. Please step inside. If you don't mind we will go directly to my study. We will be undisturbed there."

She followed him up the stairs, and he gave her a seat in the low chair near the window.

"First, Miss Babbington," he said, "before we touch upon any other branch of the subject, have you any idea from whence came that call, shortly after two o'clock this morning?"

"None whatever, sir, and it is impossible for me to find out."

"Very well. I think, however, that we will be able to discover. We will return to that point later on. You have not mentioned the circumstance to anybody, I trust."

"I have not mentioned it at all, sir."

"Thank you. Now, did the call come from your own district, or did it come through another central office?"

"It came direct."

"Then we know that the house which contains that telephone is in this district."

"Yes, sir; we are sure of that much."

"Now tell me about the call."

"There is nothing to tell save that the signal came in the usual way, and I did not notice that it came from a number which had been discontinued. In fact, I did not know at the time that it had been discontinued. Last night was my first night in that office."

"I see; and now, the call, please."

"The voice—a man's voice—asked for your number. I made the connection immediately, and you replied almost instantly."

"Although I was sound asleep when the bell rang."

"Well, sir, you answered the first ring, exactly as if you had been standing at the phone awaiting it."

"And then——"

"Something impelled me to listen. Perhaps it was the pain in the gentleman's voice; at all events, I threw the switch over so I could hear."

"And you listened and heard it all?"

"I think I heard every word, sir."

"I am surprised that you had the judgment not to interrupt. It was all that I could do to prevent myself from interrupting."

"Remember, sir, that I heard it all. I heard the gentleman say that he wished me to repeat to you all that he said, in case you did not hear it all."

"Quite true."

"I knew that you were listening."

"Nevertheless there were some words which I did not catch."

"There were some which I did not understand either, sir."

"I hope you caught those that I lost."

"I fear that I did not, for the words I lost were those I wished most to hear."

"Let me see; he tried to tell me whose house he was in. He said, 'I think I am in the house of——' Did you catch that name?"

"No, sir; I lost it."

"Again he tried to tell me what had killed him.

He said, 'I have been——' Did you hear the remainder of that sentence?"

"No, sir."

"I doubt if we could have understood them had we been in the room with him, so do not put any blame upon yourself. Now, let us pass from that for a moment."

"Very well, sir."

"When you were called up from that house afterward, what passed between you and the man who called?"

"He said that he had found the receiver down, and he asked if the telephone was in use. I told him it was not. Then he asked if it had been in use within the last hour, and I replied that it had not been in use since I had been on duty. I told him that I had noticed that his receiver had been taken off or had fallen off some time before, but I had received no reply to my inquiries."

"What then?"

"The man seemed to be much relieved by my statement, for he thanked me quite cordially—and then he hung up his receiver."

"And that was all?"

"That was all."

"You heard his voice quite distinctly?"

"As distinctly as I hear yours now."

"It is next to impossible to describe a voice, I know, but I wish you could give me some idea of this one."

"I can only say that it was masculine, and that I should say it belonged to a man of refinement."

"Good! That is a good point. Now, do you think, if you should happen to meet the owner of that voice at a dinner party, or anywhere, in fact, that you would recognize it?"

"I think it quite possible that I would be able to recognize it, sir."

"Good again."

"I realized that you would ask me that question, and I strove with all my power to fix the voice in my memory when I heard it."

"Excellent. You think you might know it again, then?"

"I think so. Of course, I am not positive. It is not the same as a voice you hear in a room, you know."

"Not at all. Now, what after all that?"

"My conversation with you over the wire; after that, nothing, until I arrived here just now."

"There was no other call over that wire?"

"No, sir."

"Now tell me how you account for a call over a wire whose number has not been used in so long a time. You know, of course, where that call should have been from."

"Certainly. I have written the address on that slip of paper," and she gave a folded sheet of paper into the detective's hand.

"Thank you," said Nick. "Now, are you sure that a telephone has not been installed in that house since the other one was removed?"

"I am positive, because, knowing you would ask that question, I have made inquiry."

"The wires are still there, I suppose?"

"That I do not know. Only the superintendent or a lineman could tell you that."

"If the wire is still there, it is more than likely that a telephone was attached without the knowledge of the company, is it not?"

"That would seem to be an explanation, sir, and yet——"

"Well?" said Nick, smiling. "Give me your ideas. I have my own, of course, but I would like to hear yours just the same."

"It seems presumptious of me, sir, to——"

"Nonsense! You may assist me more than you know. Every suggestion is good always, even though it may not be followed. A suggestion always suggests something."

"I was only thinking, sir——"

"Well?"

"That the wire which leads to that house might have been tapped somewhere between the exchange office and the house, and easily led to another and a different house. I have often heard of such instances since I have been a telephone girl."

"I have heard of such things also. This is doubtless a case in point."

"And, sir——"

"Go on."

"I think that an expert lineman could trace it, sir, to the spot where it has been tapped."

"I think so, too."

"I have put on that paper, with the address, the number of the phone that formerly belonged with that wire."

"So I see. It was thoughtful."

"Well, Mr. Carter, this is what I have been wanting to say. I know more about the wires than most telephone girls, for the reason that my father is an expert lineman, and he is in the employ of this company."

"Good! Splendid! Where is he?"

"He should be at home now, sir. He is chief of this district. He is the very man whom you should see. He can give you all the information that I cannot."

"Too bad you did not bring him here with you."

"I would have done so, only that you instructed me to talk to nobody until after I had seen you."

"Thank you, Miss Babbington. Can you get your father over the phone?"

"Easily, sir."

"Then make use of that one at your elbow. Ask him if he can come here at once, and if he cannot do so let me have the phone."

"He will wish to know the reason for asking him to come here. What shall I say?"

"Tell him that you are at Nick Carter's house. Give him the number. Tell him that the matter is important, and that it cannot be discussed over the wire. Say that you will wait here for him till he arrives. Will that do?"

"I think so."

Nick waited in silence while the conversation was in progress between Madge Babbington and her father; and presently she replaced the receiver and turned to him.

"He will be here as soon as possible—within half an hour," she announced. "He is greatly disturbed because I had not arrived at home. He will not delay. And, sir——"

"Yes?"

"He is just the man of all others who can help you. How fortunate that I happened to be in charge of the exchange last night."

"I think so too," said Nick. "If the daughter is a sample of the father, you may be sure that he is just the man I want, and that he will help me indeed."

CHAPTER V.

THE IDENTITY OF THE MURDERED MAN.

Thomas Babbington arrived at the house of the detective a few minutes after eight o'clock, and, as in the case of the daughter, Nick Carter met him at the door.

"There is nothing the matter, Mr. Babbington," said Nick, as he admitted him, "that is, not a thing which should disturb you in the slightest. I merely wish for your advice and assistance, that is all."

"But my daughter? How happens it that she is here?"

"She came as you have done, at my request, over the phone."

As soon as they were seated together in the study, and greetings between father and daughter had been exchanged, Nick Carter related the story of the night.

He told it just as it had occurred, and as we already know it, taking care to give the young woman due credit for all that she had done to help him in the matter.

"And now," said the detective, in conclusion, "we come down to the question of tracing that phone. It would seem as if that should be an easy matter."

"Well, sir," replied the lineman, "it might, and again it might not."

"How is that?"

"Sometimes lines are easy to follow, and sometimes they are worse than the fifteen puzzle."

"It would seem, would it not, that a line, in order to be tapped so that a signal over it made by removing a certain receiver, should easily be traced to the point where it was tapped?"

The lineman shook his head.

"It may be that this will be dead easy, but now and then we have a case where it is next to impossible to do it."

"Tell me one such case; it may suggest something to us."

"Well, sir, I'll tell you one, and then if it is all the same to you, and you will pardon my suggesting it, I think it would be a good thing to get on the track of that wire with as little delay as possible. And, in the meantime, if you don't need Madge any more, she might as well get along home."

"Certainly," replied Nick. "And, in the meantime, I am exceedingly obliged to her for all that she has done, as I will take occasion to prove, later on."

"Well," said Babbington, when they were alone, "I know of one case where some parties desired to get information from the office of a certain banker downtown. They thought of tapping the telephone wire, but they also remembered that it could not be long before the fact that it was tapped would be discovered."

"Well?"

"The point they wished to make was this: They knew that the fact that the wire had been tapped would soon be discovered, and they wished to fix things so that when it was discovered, the wire could not be traced to them."

"How did they do it?"

"Why, they simply hired a special line of the company—a special line, mind you, between two offices, one in Harlem, and the other not far from the Battery—a line which was supposed to have no other connections anywhere, and which did not have any when it was installed."

"I understand. Simply a private line between their two offices."

"That's the idea. Well, after that was done, they found an old wire like this one in your murder case—a wire where the service had been discontinued and was not likely to be resumed. Now what do you suppose they did with that?"

"I haven't an idea."

"They tapped that old wire, led an extra wire from it to the wire they really wished to tap—the one into the banker's office; then they tapped their own private wire and let the tap into the house where the long disused wire was. Do you see?"

"Not quite."

"Well, that old wire, out of use, now had two taps onto it. One of the taps led to the office of the banker and the other led to their private wire. The old wire itself, of course, led into the exchange, same as it always had, but they disconnected that so that it would not drop the signal if it was worked.

"Now, when they put the second tap on that wire, they put it on the house, and right inside the switchboard of the original telephone. They concealed it there. In order to accomplish it, they ran their wire—an insulated one—right under the gutter of the roof and down into the house through the chimney. You couldn't find a trace of that wire in sight anywhere within five hundred feet of where it did the work.

"Now, sir, when we discovered that the banker's wire had been tapped, we found no difficulty in spoiling that part of it, nor in tracing it to the house where there had once been a telephone, but there we ran into a puzzle.

"There were reasons why we knew positively that a telephone could not have been brought into that house and used, but all the same there seemed to be proof positive that just that very thing had been done, and we were up against it hard.

"Mr. Carter, I was almost three weeks working out that problem and tracing the men down to units. We thought they had been lingering around the neighborhood of Madison Square, or, to be more exact, in Twenty-fifth Street near Fourth Avenue, while they received their select information over the wire, but, as a matter of fact, they were getting it at One Hundred and Sixty-second Street at one end, and at the Battery at the other end, all the while. This case may be as puzzling as that one."

"Perhaps it will," agreed Nick, laughing. "Who was the banker whose wire was tapped so dexterously?"

"Old Daniel J. Dean. He's dead now; been dead a month."

Nick started.

"Wait a moment, Babbington," he said. "Your remarks have suggested something to me. Just wait while I use the telephone."

"Certainly, sir."

Nick glanced at his watch as he crossed the room toward the phone, and saw that it still lacked a few minutes of nine o'clock. Then he raised the receiver from the hooks and placed it against his ear.

Having called for the number he desired, he was presently told that that particular wire was busy; but he kept calling, and waiting, and calling again, so that after almost half an hour he got the connection.

"Is that the residence of Jared Logan?" he inquired, then.

"Yes," came the reply in the voice of the butler of that establishment.

"Is Mr. Logan about yet?" he asked then. "If so, ask him if he will step to the phone. This is Mr. Carter—Nick Carter."

For a moment there was no reply, and Nick judged that the person at the other end of the wire had placed one hand over the transmitter while he talked with some other person in the room with him: then a voice said:

"One moment, please."

Then, in a few seconds, another voice inquired:

"Is this Mr. Carter?"

"Yes," replied Nick.

"And you wished to speak to Mr. Logan in person?"

"Yes," replied Nick.

"Then it cannot be possible that you have heard of the terrible thing that has happened some time last night."

"What terrible thing?" asked Nick.

"Mr. Logan is dead, sir."

"Dead! Good Heaven, man! Do you mean that?"

"Yes. It is true."

"Where? When? How? You know I was his friend. Tell me about it."

"He was found dead in his office this morning about half-past seven when the watchman admitted the cleaning women. They found him."

"In his own office, in Broad Street?"

"Yes. It was not murder, evidently, although it seemed so at first. Mr. Logan had evidently fallen in a fainting fit, and, in doing so, had cut himself with his own penknife, which he must have been holding open in his hand at the time. He bled to death. That is all I know about it, Mr. Carter. I have received my own information over the telephone. The coroner has viewed the body, and they are bringing it home now."

"Very well," said Nick, controlling himself with an effort. "I wish you would say to whoever happens to be in authority there, that you have talked with me and that I will be there as soon as I can get there; and, in the meantime, I wish you would see that the condition of the body is disturbed as little as possible."

Nick replaced the receiver on the hook and turned to the lineman.

"Babbington," he said, "I know who was murdered last night."

"Who?"

"Jared Logan, the millionaire. He was the man who telephoned to me while he was dying. I wonder now that I did not recognize the voice, for now that I know who it was, it seems as if I ought to have known at the time."

"But I heard you say over the phone that his office is in Broad Street, and that he was found dead there. The man with whom you talked could hardly have been there, in a pri——"

"He wasn't."

"Then what are you talking about?"

"Jared Logan was the man who was killed. According to his own words, he left the office at seven o'clock and started to enter his coupé at the door. It was twelve minutes past two when he telephoned to me."

"Well?"

"Well, he was taken somewhere else and done away with. Afterward, he was taken back to his own office and left there where he would be found this morning. He certainly was not killed in his own office."

"Maybe he was crazy when he was talking to you."

"Crazy? He was the sanest man I ever listened to. Babbington, I am going to that office before I go to the house. I want you to take up the question of these wires. Run down that particular wire for me so that you will be ready to tell me all about it this afternoon. I will meet you here at eight o'clock to-night, for I will be busy till then; and, Babbington, don't forget that you are getting twenty-five dollars a day while you work for me, and a hundred cold if you do it all up in one day."

CHAPTER VI.

THE BLOOD STAIN ON THE FLOOR.

Nick Carter had his own reasons for determining to go to the office of Jared Logan before going to the house.

He knew the habits of Mr. Logan thoroughly, and he also understood the character of the man who had been so foully dealt with.

"No other man I know would have had the courage, and the good sense as well, to have telephoned me as he did, in the hour of his death."

Jared Logan, multi-millionaire, capitalist and financier, had fought through a regular millionaire's war with one of the greatest men of the time, and with the aid of Nick Carter had come out of the battle victoriously. Daniel J. Dean, the man mentioned by Babbington in his recital of the tapped wire story, had ever been Logan's enemy, and it had been the mention of his name that had put the sudden thought into the detective's head that Jared Logan might have been the man with whom he had talked over the telephone.

But Dean had already been dead more than a month. The detective had not thought of connecting him with the crime, naturally. Still, the mention of his name had put him on the right track, nevertheless.

And now, Jared Logan was also dead.

More than that, he was murdered. Nick Carter was positive of that the instant he heard of his death.

"Intercepted as he was leaving his office; struck down as he was entering his cab; taken to a room, nobody knows where, and kept there while he slowly bled to death; the blood which came from the severed artery caught and saved for future use; the body taken back to the office in Broad Street; the murderers admitted to that office by the keys which Logan carried on his person; the body placed with an open knife in its hand, as if the victim had cut himself in falling; the blood he had already shed, spilled upon the floor around the spot where he was found—God! I see it all now! It is as plain as if I had been there and witnessed the whole thing, but doubtless so well done that if I had not been here to answer that phone, or if he had not had the strength to telephone to me, I might myself have been deceived, and have thought that he came to his death through an accident."

He did not speak again until he arrived at the office, and he had only to make himself known to be admitted at once to the scene of the discovery.

Inspector McClusky was there. He, too, had just arrived, so that he and the detective entered the place almost together.

The body, as we know, had already been removed and was on its way to the home of the dead banker.

Nevertheless, the position in which it had lain was quickly pointed out to the two detectives by the officer in charge.

"The room has been trampled over to beat the band," remarked the inspector. "There is not much that we can find here; but I suppose the report of the coroner and McFadden is all right. There is no doubt that it was an accident, is there? Or a suicide?"

"You can bet your last dollar that it was not suicide!" replied Nick; "and you can bet all that I have got that it was not an accident, either."

"Murder?" asked the inspector, laconically. "I have not looked over the ground at all, as you know."

They were standing by this time directly over the spot where the body was found, and, in reply, Nick pointed one finger at the great splotch of blood on the carpet.

"George," he said, "neither of us have looked at things here, only I happen to be possessed of some in-

formation which came directly to me. That splash of blood looks mighty natural, doesn't it?"

"Why, yes. It does to me."

"Just as if it had trickled slowly—or rapidly, if you please—from a severed artery?"

"I should say that it does. What are you getting at?"

"I'll tell you in a moment. Now, if it had run from an artery, directly upon that carpet, it would have soaked in pretty thoroughly before it dried very much, wouldn't it?"

"Sure."

"Whereas, if it so happened that this particular blood was caught in a basin and saved—saved for the purpose of pouring it upon this carpet several hours later, the blood would have become chilled, and, consequently, much thicker in that time, wouldn't it?"

"Naturally."

"And it would not have soaked through the carpet to any great extent, eh?"

"No; I should say not, as a matter of fact."

"Well, I don't know anything about it except what I knew before I entered the place, so I'm not trying to be smart, you understand, but if you will take the point of your knife and run it under the edge of that splotch of blood, I'll wager a hundred to one that the whole thing will peel off the carpet so that you can pick it up in one lump, almost like so much soft rubber. Try it."

"By Jove, Nick, you must know something rather direct to be able to bet on that proposition."

"I do. Try it."

The inspector did try it, and it proved almost as Nick had said it would.

"You are almost right, Nick, but not quite," said the inspector.

"Wait a minute. I'll turn my back and ask a few questions. I do it only to test my own theories. Do you mind?"

"Not at all. Go ahead."

"Is not that blood a great deal thinner in some places than in others?"

"Yes; decidedly so."

"Is it not of a lighter color in some spots?"

"Considerably."

"Now see if the carpet is not perceptibly damp for a margin of two or three inches around the spot where the blood is, but where no real blood can be seen distinctly."

"Yes; that is true, also."

"Now take this knife; it is big and strong, and as sharp as a razor. Got it?"

"Yes."

"Cut out all that section of the carpet where the blood is—all the way around, and about six inches from the blood."

"I see the point," said the inspector. "You think they have mixed warm water with the blood before they put it here."

"I am sure of it; and if they have, the floor under the carpet will show it, won't it?"

"Sure thing."

"Well, does it?"

"It does for a fact."

"That is all, old chap. There is nothing more for us to do here. Will you bring that bit of carpet away with you?"

"You bet I will."

"Then come out and get into the cab with me. I'll take you uptown, and while we are going I will tell you the story I heard last night. You haven't seen the body yet, have you?"

"No; I just got here."

"Have you time to go to Logan's house with me?"

"Sure."

"Then we'll go there instead of to your office. Come on."

During the ride Nick told the inspector all that we already know about the crime, and how he heard about it over the phone, as well as all that he had done since that time.

"I shouldn't wonder if they would have fooled us, inspector, if it had not been for that message," he said, in conclusion.

"They might, for a fact."

"We might not have thought to go into that matter

of mixing the warm water with the old chap's blood, eh?"

"There would have been no apparent reason for it, that is certain. We would have had no cause to suppose that he had been killed elsewhere, and then brought here afterward."

"None whatever."

"Now, we are the only persons who know about this, except the lineman and his daughter, and they won't talk. What do you say to keeping the thing a secret from all hands until we nail the fellows who did the act?"

"That is what I would advise."

"It will give them a little sense of security."

"To be sure."

"The family need not know the facts of the case until it is necessary to tell them, and even then we can keep it out of the papers for a while."

"Agreed."

"You know, George, we both owe something to the memory of Jared Logan. He was a good friend."

"And as fine a man as I ever knew."

"Right! And that was a plucky thing he did last night. Think of his telling me all that story while he was slowly bleeding to death. Think of the struggle he had to keep his mind working straight during that ordeal. You know when people are losing blood in that way their minds wander."

"His did not."

"Not a bit of it. He was game to the end. He heard those murderers at the door, when they were returning, but I'll bet a good deal he was dead when they got to him. He talked to me to the last. I wish I might have told him that I heard it all."

"He knows it now, old man."

"I hope so. George, if I never accomplish another thing in the world but one, that one will be to find and send to the chair the men who killed Jared Logan."

"I'm with you in that, Nick."

"We can do it, too. I'm satisfied of one thing."

"What is that?"

"They are men of wealth. Men who call themselves gentlemen. Men of position. Men of affairs, and I should not in the least wonder if we find in the end that this is a part of the old warfare between Dean and Logan. In some way the old devil, Dean, has left a legacy of hate behind him, and the revenge he sought so vainly, while he lived, has come a month after his death. But we will see; we will see."

CHAPTER VII.

A LEGACY OF HATE.

The body of Jared Logan rested in the library of his home—the room in which he had delighted to pass most of the time which he could spare away from his office and his business.

The long and wide, flat-top desk which filled the middle of the room, upon which millions upon millions of dollars' worth of business had been transacted, and across which so many history-making conferences had been held, was utilized for his last resting place within the house.

His private secretary was on guard at the door when Nick Carter and the inspector entered the room, and he stepped forward eagerly to greet the detective.

"I have told Mrs. Logan that you were on your way here, Mr. Carter," he said. "She expressed the wish that you would go to her for a moment before you leave the house."

"Certainly," replied Nick. "Is anybody inside this room now?"

"No, sir."

"Will you see to it that the inspector and I are not interrupted? We wish to be alone with the body of Mr. Logan for a time."

"Certainly, sir."

And so Inspector McClusky and the detective passed through the doorway into the library and closed and fastened the door behind them.

For two or three moments the two officers of the law stood side by side looking down upon the waxen features of their dead friend.

Presently Nick Carter broke the silence.

"Inspector," he said, "if you had listened to his last

words over the telephone, as I did, you would appreciate that expression of determined resolution which is stamped upon his features even now—an expression which even the grim hand of death could not take from him. Now, let us see if the murderers have left behind them any trace of their work, other than what we already know."

There was, however, no sign of a clew of any kind discoverable.

The villains had done their work thoroughly and well. They had left no trace behind them.

It was true that the detectives discovered traces of a bruise at the back of the financier's head, demonstrating that he had been struck down from behind in the beginning of the attack upon him, and, doubtless, at the very moment when he was entering his cab in front of his office.

"That would account," said Nick, "for the fact that he remembered giving some directions to his driver, but could not say positively if he really entered his coupé."

"Probably," rejoined the inspector, "it was the driver who struck him. He might have turned in his seat just as Mr. Logan stooped down to enter the cab. He could easily have reached back and struck the blow at that time."

"True," assented Nick; "and the bruise, if discovered, without the knowledge which we possess concerning it, might readily have been attributed to a fall. Now let us examine the wound."

This was discovered to be in the right thigh.

The artery had been severed dexterously, as if the operator had known exactly where to look for it; and the wound was as clean cut and exact as if it had indeed been received in the manner suggested by the position of the body when it was found in the office.

"I have never seen a slicker and more scientific job in all my experience," was the inspector's comment.

"Nor I," assented Nick.

"Exactly such a wound might have been produced by his falling, as he is supposed by the coroner to have fallen, with the open penknife in his hand. The consequence would have been about the same as his murderers intended it to appear."

After that they both worked silently, going about their investigations, each in his own manner and after his own methods, rarely commenting upon what they saw, but inevitably arriving at the same conclusions.

Then, presently, they raised their eyes and looked at each other across the dead body of their friend.

"They haven't left a leg for us to stand on," said Nick, at last.

"Not one," agreed the inspector.

"If it had not been for the telephone message——"

"We will have to confess, Nick, that if it had not been for that, we would have been about as much in the dark as the coroner."

"Quite as much, I fear; only I do think it would have occurred to us to have examined those blood stains on the carpet."

"Oh, yes. But now that we do know something about it all, what is the next move?"

"Babbington," said Nick.

"Eh?"

"The lineman. The expert. He knows his business. We must discover the room where the crime was really committed."

"There will be blood stains there all right."

"Yes; and stains which the murderers did not intend should be there, either. There will be stains all the way from that couch in the corner to the table where the telephone was found and used; there will be a decided pool of blood on the floor where he rested while he talked to me over the wire."

As they were on the point of leaving the house, Nick remembered that Mrs. Logan had expressed a wish to see him, and accordingly he presented himself at her door, and presently she came to him in the little room which she reserved for her private parlor.

Madam Logan was a woman of strong character. The shock of her husband's death and the terrible suffering she had undergone since the knowledge of it had come to her, had left their marks upon her, but otherwise her face was calm, and strong, and self-reliant.

"Thank you for coming to me, Mr. Carter," she said, giving the detective her hand. "I know that in addition to your professional zeal in this matter, you were Mr. Logan's friend; and I think you believe also, what I almost know to be a fact, that my husband was not the victim of an accident, as it would appear, and as those who discovered his body would wish to make me believe. Am I right, sir?"

"You are not convinced that it was an accident, then?" asked Nick, guardedly.

"I am sure that it was not an accident."

"Then how do you account for the fact?"

"I cannot account for it, sir. That is for men in your profession to do. I can only surmise."

"But even your surmises might be of assistance to me. Tell me whatever suspicion you may have in your mind, no matter how trivial it may appear to be; there is always something to be had in suggestion, no matter how remote."

"I cannot say that I even have surmises; certainly I have no thought about the matter which amounts to a suspicion—I mean, of course, a suspicion which might implicate any person or persons. I am merely convinced in my own mind that my husband was murdered."

"By whom?"

"By his enemies, of course."

"But what enemies? By whom? Who could have accomplished this act?"

"Alas, sir! How can I even guess? If Daniel J. Dean were alive, I should not have far to search for a suspicion; but a dead man cannot rise in his grave, after he has murdered there more than a month, and strike a blow like this one."

"Daniel J. Dean left many legacies behind him," suggested Nick, speaking guardedly, and watching Madam Logan narrowly to discover what, if any, impression his remark might make upon her.

She started a little when he uttered the last remark, and then calmly replied:

"I too, had thought of that; but I believed you would think it absurd."

"Nothing is absurd which can assist us in getting on the right track," said Nick.

"You believe, then, as I do, that my husband was murdered?" she demanded.

"I do, madam. I had not intended to inform you of my belief until I had a more definite statement to give to you; but now, I think it is wise to tell you all I know. You are strong enough and wise enough to help me in this work."

"Indeed I am, sir. I beg that you will keep nothing back from me."

Thus abjured, Nick related the story of his experiences of the early morning. He told, almost word for word, of that conversation over the telephone; he left nothing to her imagination which he could describe, and he saw that she followed every word he uttered with a clearness of understanding and divination which surprised him.

"I thank you for taking me into your confidence," she said to him, when he had finished. "It is what Mr. Logan would have wished you to do if he could direct matters still."

"And now that you have heard it all, madam, does it suggest nothing to you?"

"Nothing."

"I had hoped that your husband might have made some remark in your presence which would have betrayed the fact that he was in fear of an attack against him from some source."

"No; he said nothing."

"Then it is only an intuition on your part which leads you to suggest that the machinations of Daniel J. Dean while he lived might have lingered after his death, and somehow brought about this result?"

"That is all."

"Do you happen to know why your husband chose to remain alone in his office after the departure of the clerks, last night?"

"No; unless——"

"Ah! Unless what?"

"I know that he had an important meeting on hand for to-day. He rarely talked to me about his business, as you know; he talked to nobody; he always kept his

own council; but he did mention that he had such a meeting to-day."

"Where? When? And with whom?"

"At the office of the Inter-Continental Railroad Company; at five o'clock this afternoon, I think it was; and with the——"

"With the directors of that road, of course. Madam, I am a director of that road. I had almost forgotten it, but it is true. Mr. Logan made me a director long ago, when I worked up the case of the blowing open of his strong-room vault and safes. Dean and your husband were the promotors, together, of that road. It was that road which made them lock horns and fight each other so bitterly. Dean once stole the bonds of that railroad, as you know. Madam, you have made a wise suggestion to me in your recollection of that meeting. I remember now that I received a notice to attend it, but thinking that Mr. Logan would notify me if he wanted me there, I had forgotten it. As it is now, I think I will attend.

CHAPTER VIII.

A DEAD MAN'S POWER.

"Inspector," said Nick, when he rejoined that official, "I sent Babbington away this morning to make his preparations for running down the wire. He is to meet me at my house at eight o'clock to-night, so if you will keep the morning of to-morrow open, we will utilize that time for the job. How does that suit you?"

"All right."

"You remember, don't you, that Logan made me a director in the Inter-Continental?"

"Yes. What of it?"

"Nothing; only there is a meeting of the directors this afternoon, and I think I will attend it."

"Do you mean that it has anything to do with this case?"

"I mean that it might have something to do with it, that is all. There is the meeting to be held. Logan was to attend that meeting. I have reason to believe that it was business connected with that meeting which detained him at his office last night. It was the affairs of that railway enterprise which created the war between Logan and Dean. Dean is dead, but the railway matter is very much alive; so are the interests which were bound up with old Dean's. We both know that long ago, when the meeting was held in Logan's house, where the bonds were to be produced when Dean believed that he had fixed Logan so that he could not produce them, Dean had confederates at that meeting. Logan held the balance of power, to be sure, but if we had not recovered those bonds for Logan, he would have looked like thirty cents at that meeting, and Dean would have run the show."*

"Sure thing."

"And we both know that Dean never forgave that affair; so I suppose there were others who did not forgive it, either. Anyhow, I shall attend the meeting. I received a notice and put it aside. Logan had asked me to do that unless he sent me a special request to be present. He wished me to take an active interest in the affairs of the road only when it was necessary to the preservation of his interests, so when I received notices I put them aside and thought no more about them unless I heard from him."

"All right. It is a good idea to attend, although I cannot see that there will be anything in it. When will I see you?"

"Come to my house to-morrow morning at eight o'clock. Will that do?"

"Yes; I'll be there."

When Nick Carter arrived at his own home he found the coroner awaiting him.

"Carter," he said, "when I went to the office of Jared Logan this morning, to view the body, and all that, I found a letter on the floor addressed to you. It was under the table, where it had evidently been dropped by mistake. It was sealed."

"Have you the letter with you?"

"Yes; wait. I have not broken the seal. Of course, I had a right to do so; it was entirely within the

*See Numbers 397 and 398 of the NICK CARTER WEEKLY.

province of my professional duty, but after thinking it over, I decided to bring it to you intact."

"That was mighty good of you, coroner."

"And I thought that in return, that if it should happen that a mystery should develop out of this affair, you would put me wise before the inquest. I would like to get some of the credit which might attach to such a discovery, you know."

"Naturally, and you shall. A mystery will develop, although it will not be a mystery for long; I can tell you that. Now, if you will give me the letter, I promise that you shall see the contents."

"Here it is, Carter."

Nick took the letter, broke the seal, and spread the sheet open before him.

Presently he raised his eyes and regarded the coroner scrutinizingly.

"I believe that you are a man of discretion," he said, at last, "and I will take you into my confidence, as far as I can at the present time. Here, as you see, are three inclosures in this letter. One of them is a notice to attend a director's meeting, which is to be held at five o'clock this afternoon. That is only a duplicate of another notice of the same kind which was sent to me through the mail. Another of the inclosures—here it is—is a proxy which empowers me to vote Mr. Logan's shares at that meeting; that means, as you no doubt are aware, that in the case of Mr. Logan's absence from that meeting, I would control it absolutely, for it informs me of something which I did not know before: it tells me that a stockholders' meeting is to be held just before the directors' meeting. For some reason, probably known to the secretary, my notice to attend the stockholders' meeting, was forgotten when my notification was sent to me."

"All this means nothing to me, Carter, save that I am glad I brought the letter to you."

"It means a great deal to me. Wait; you have not yet learned about the third inclosure."

"No; what is that?"

"It is a note from Mr. Logan, dated at six forty-five last night. Listen: 'Dear Carter: It may be that the Dean interests, which are fighting quite as hard as Dean did himself, while he lived, have thought it best to forget to send you a notice of the stockholders' meeting, as well as the other one—the directors' meeting. I want you to attend both, for you will be re-elected a director. I inclose a proxy which I wish you to have in your pocket in case anything should happen to prevent my presence. I want my son, Felix, now in Europe, elected president, and I want Morgan Dupont, Hiram Slosson, and Aaron Bulger made directors, in place of Paul Fanton, Conroy Manners and Mitchell Crogan. That is all. I give you these pointers to use in case of accident, for I shall be at the meeting unless the ghost of old Dean should rise up and choke me in the meantime. Yours, Jared Logan.' Now, coroner, what do you think of that, eh?"

"Mr. Logan wasn't choked to death, or we might think that the ghost had risen."

"No; he was bled to death."

"By the ghost?"

"Yes; that is, it amounts to that, almost."

"Look here, Carter, do you mean to say that you think Logan was not killed accidentally?"

"I mean to say in plain words that he was deliberately murdered."

The coroner stared.

"And you will be able to prove it, you think?"

"I know I will, as you shall discover before you are much older than you are now."

"Carter, you are a wonder!"

"No, I'm not. It is old Dean who is, or was, a wonder. A man who, more than a month after he is dead, can have another man murdered, is a crack-a-jack, don't you think?"

"I should say so."

"All right, coroner. I'll see you later; sometime tomorrow, I should say. In the meantime, I suppose I can rely upon you to forget all that has passed between us."

The detective's first act when he was alone was to telephone to Madam Logan, requesting that she would cable for her son to come immediately to New York, if she had not already done so, and his next was to adopt the disguise of a portly, middle-aged gentleman of

wealth, in which the gentlemen whom he was to meet that afternoon had seen him before; and at four-thirty o'clock he presented himself at the meeting of the stockholders of the Inter-Continental Railroad Company, in Broad Street.

His entrance caused a little flutter of surprise, and that he was exactly on time was evidenced by the fact that the president was just in the act of calling the meeting to order.

He was Nicholas Carter to them, but not THE Nick Carter whom they knew about as a detective. Not one of them had ever connected him with that celebrated individual. He was known among them simply as a man of wealth and a supporter of the rule of Jared Logan.

The moment the meeting was called to order, Nick rose in his place.

"Gentlemen," he said, "you have all heard the sad intelligence of the death of our friend, Jared Logan. I shall offer, presently, suitable resolutions concerning that event, but to my mind the serious affairs of this meeting should be attended to first. I have here, duly signed and witnessed before a notary—fortunately, for Mr. Logan was a careful and a methodical man—a proxy which empowers me to vote upon the stock held by Mr. Logan. This I wish the secretary to record. Thank you. The proxy, as you are aware, places me in entire control of this meeting. There are five hundred thousand shares of stock, of which I represent two hundred and fifty-five thousand and nine hundred shares. We will proceed now, if you please, to the election of officers. I have prepared a list of them, which I will now deliver to the secretary, and which he will record as the voice of this meeting; but first I will read the names as they appear here."

He waited an instant, but not a word was uttered, and he proceeded:

"For president of the company, Felix J. Logan; for first vice-president, Nicholas Carter—myself, gentlemen—and for directors, the list will remain as it was before, with the exception that Morgan Dupont is elected in place of Paul Fanton, Hiram Slosson is elected in place of Conroy Manners, and Aaron Bulger is elected in place of Mitchell Crogan. I trust there will be no objection, gentlemen. I am carrying out the wishes of Jared Logan. If there is objection, I should like to hear it now."

There was no reply, and presently the detective continued:

"The unfortunate accident which deprived Mr. Logan of his life did not prevent him foreseeing that an accident might occur which would keep him away from this meeting, and accordingly he made this proxy to me yesterday, early in the day. Later, at 6:45 P. M.; in fact, he inclosed it to me with a short letter of instructions. The letter and the proxy were found by the coroner beside his dead body."

Nick's eyes were shooting rapid-fire glances between the faces of Fanton, Manners and Crogan while he was speaking, and he saw them exchange rapid glances, and he also saw the man Fanton grind his teeth together in rage.

"He is cursing his own stupidity because he did not find that letter with the proxy inside," was Nick's thought; but he showed no sign of it on his visage.

"Now," he said aloud, "I would suggest that out of respect to the memory of our former president, we adjourn, and that the secretary be instructed to call a meeting of the directors for one week from to-day. If that is satisfactory, gentlemen, I will assume the chair, as acting president, and adjourn the meeting. Mr. Secretary, you have your instructions. Gentlemen, the meeting of the stockholders of the Inter-Continental Railroad Company stands adjourned subject to call according to the by-laws of the company. Good-afternoon."

When he left the room not a word was spoken. The men he left behind him were staring into each other's faces, incapable of action or motion.

"Whew!" breathed Nick, when he reached the street. "It makes a chap sick to breathe that air. Dear old Jared Logan! You may rest easy in your grave, for if Dean was able to have you murdered a month after his own death, you were able to make your power felt after your own demise.

"Ay, and more, you pointed your murderers out to me, as well."

CHAPTER IX.

INSPECTOR BYRNES' PRIVATE MORGUE.

Nick Carter went directly from the stockholders' meeting to police headquarters, and fortunately he caught the inspector just as that official was in the act of leaving for his dinner.

"Come back into your office a moment, George," he said. "I did not expect to see you again before morning, but I do want to detain you now a little while."

"All right, Nick," replied the inspector when they were seated together, away from everybody. "What can I do for you now?"

"When Inspector Byrnes was in charge here he kept a ledger account of the good and the bad about every man of prominence in the city, as well as about the crooks. Have you kept up that habit of his?"

"Well, I should say I had. More than that, I have a copy of his old histories."

"Good! He used to call it his private morgue."

"I call it that, also."

"Well, get out the books which would contain the records of the Fantons, the Manners and the Crogans. Give me Paul Fanton first."

"He's a bad egg, Nick, if he is a rich man."

"I know that. He is one of the murderers of Logan, as sure as you sit there, and Manners and Crogan are the others. I'd almost stake my life upon it. You see, I have got a notion in my head that when we trace down that telephone wire it will take us to a house where one of those men feels very much at home, and if I know beforehand where all their hang-outs are located, it may simplify matters."

"Did you nail them at that meeting?"

"That's what I did; to my own satisfaction, but hardly strong enough, although I think any one of them might be frightened into a confession if you should bring them here and give them the third degree. But I don't want any State's evidence business in this thing; I want to give every one of them the electric cure."

"Good! Here is Paul Fanton's record."

"Read it to me."

"It goes back over a career of twenty years."

"Well, you will know what I wish to hear. Read just such parts as will interest me."

"'Paul Fanton. Born Syracuse, 1855. Suspected of implication in killing of Joel Grimes, a peddler, in Syracuse, in 1875. Came to New York 1880. Clerk in Wall Street. Arrested for forgery 1882. Acquitted.' Do you want all that?"

"No; was he ever convicted?"

"No. Here, I'll read some more. 'Slick article. Natural born crook. Used by——' Hum! You don't need a lot of names. I'll skip the reading and tell you about it as I read."

"All right. Go ahead."

"He has always been used by the powers in the financial world for their bribery affairs. A lobbyist, and all that. Suddenly seemed possessed of a lot of money. Always owned interest in gambling houses, and places worse than that."

"Gambling houses and places even worse, eh? Skip down to your own notes and let us see what he is interested in just now, besides the Inter-Continental Railway."

The inspector closed the book and replied:

"I can tell you that without referring to the notes. He is a silent partner of Bill Buckram, the gambler. I haven't been able to nail that to him, but I know it is true, just the same."

"And do you know every one of their places?"

"I think I could find them if I tried very hard," replied the inspector, with a smile.

"Then I think we will find the other end of that telephone wire in one of them."

"No doubt."

"Will you have a list of them ready for to-morrow morning?"

"Sure."

"Now, about Manners and Crogan. Let me have

the books. I will glance over their histories myself and save you the trouble."

For half an hour after that Nick Carter silently pored over the three books which the inspector had taken from the safe, for there was a separate book for each letter of the alphabet, and two or three for some of them.

At the end of that time he closed them and returned them to the inspector, who replaced them in the safe.

"They are all cut out of about the same kind of cloth," he said.

"That is about the size of it."

"But I think it is in one of Fanton's houses where we will find the blood stains."

"So do I."

"Strange, isn't it, how those fellows begin by being crooks, make a lot of money, and finally, after years of crookedness, buy houses in upper Fifth Avenue and so force their way into good society?"

"A lot of them do it; and their careers would be forgotten utterly if it were not for these books which Byrnes started. Why, there is not a single peccadillo of a minister or a banker—or anybody, in fact—which ever came to his notice, which is not recorded there."

"It would make some of them squirm if they knew it, wouldn't it?"

"Squirm! They would froth at the mouth. Say, Nick, a blackmailers' syndicate could afford to give twenty-five million dollars for that set of books, and make money out of them at that."

"You bet! Well, I think I know more about those three gentlemen than they can remember themselves, now. We'll get our claws on them by to-morrow night, too."

"Do you think they should be shadowed?"

"No. They haven't an idea that they are suspected or ever will be. Let them alone."

"All right."

"You will be on hand at eight in the morning?"

"Sure thing."

"Then we'll try a little game of hare-and-hounds, with a wire for the paper, three millionaires for the hares, and——"

"And the spirit of Jared Logan for the hounds."

Thomas Babbington did not appear at Nick Carter's house at eight o'clock that evening, as he had agreed to do, and after waiting an hour for him, Nick resorted to the telephone.

"Hello, Central," he said, as soon as he was answered. "Is Miss Babbington on duty there to-night?"

"No, sir. She resigned her position to-day," came the astonishing reply.

"Indeed!" said Nick. "Do you happen to know why?"

"Only that she said that her father was suddenly called away on business, and that she was going with him. They were going out of the city, I think."

"Do you know where?"

"No; only I know that she said the storage people were already in their house, packing their things, and that she was to meet her father at the station."

"What station? Did she tell you that?"

"The Grand Central."

"Thank you. What time did you see her?"

"About four o'clock this afternoon; no, it was about three. She said they were to take a four o'clock train."

"Thank you. Good-by."

Nick replaced the receiver.

Then, for several minutes, he thought very hard and fast.

"Fanton and company are smarter than I thought," he said to himself at the end of that time. "They propose to cover every track they can. Let me see. Four o'clock train at the Grand Central. That could mean nothing but Boston, could it? There is a Cunarder sails from Boston in the morning, unless I am greatly mistaken. The four o'clock train would be due in Boston about ten—no, at ten exactly."

He turned to the telephone again and asked for long distance; that procured, he asked for the chief of police of Boston. In ten minutes he had him on the wire.

"Hello, chief," he said. "This is Nick Carter. I'm in New York. The train out of here at four o'clock arrives in Boston at ten, I think."

"That's right. What of it?"

"There are two people on that train whom I wish you to detain on any pretense you care to use. Inspector McClusky joins me in this request."

"All right. Who are they?"

"Thomas Babbington, an expert lineman, employed by the telephone company here, and his daughter Madge. I don't think they will be disguised or will deny their names. Show them every courtesy, only keep them. Will you do that?"

"I will."

"And let me know by wire as soon as you have them?"

"Yes."

"Good-by."

Nick hung up the receiver again.

"Now what am I to make of this?" he mused. "Only this: Fanton and the others remembered that little incident of the telephone being on the floor. They know that Logan at least made an attempt to telephone. They know that the attention of the company was called to the fact that there was a connection where there should be none, and that therefore an investigation will be made. They know that Babbington is the smartest man in the business, and so, in addition to covering up their tracks as thoroughly as possible by the removal of wires and all that, they have decided to send Babbington out of the country.

"Fifty thousand dollars would be a fortune to Babbington, and nothing to them, so they have sent for him and given him an imaginary job on the other side, and, incidentally, a good wad of money, and he has accepted and gone; and, of course, he has taken his daughter with him.

"The point is, did Babbington tell Fanton and the others all that he knew?

"I hardly think so, for it is not likely that Babbington saw any of the principals in the transaction, or that he knows who they are. Somebody else has sent him away for them. Well, it all resolves itself down to one proposition, which is that if I want that wire run down I will have to do it myself; and"—addressing the empty air—"if anybody should creep down the chimney into the fireplace, and ask you if Nick Carter can do the act, rise up on your hind legs and answer:

"Yes!"

CHAPTER X.

THE HAND OF GOD WAS IN IT.

Thomas Babbington, as it proved, did not happen to be the only expert lineman in the city of New York.

When Nick Carter, accompanied by the inspector, the following morning applied at the main offices of the telephone company, a man was immediately placed at their service in whom the detective speedily discovered a treasure.

"It is more sport for me to hunt down a wire that has puzzled everybody else," he said, "than it was for a bloodhound to chase a negro in the old slavery days. No hunter on the track of a bear has half as good a time as I do in a case of this kind, and now that the company has given me full sweep, we won't have any trouble. We will go first to the house in Madison Avenue, where the old disconnected telephone of that number was located. Then we will trace the wire back, if there is a wire, until we find a place where it has been tampered with, for tampered with it has been somewhere."

"Perhaps there will be a section of it missing," suggested Nick.

"Well, in that case we will know that the connection was made somewhere along the missing section, won't we?"

"I suppose so."

The house in Madison Avenue proved to be a dwelling house in which very respectable people resided. They informed the detectives that there had not been a telephone in that house since they had lived there, and even the lineman could find no trace of a wire anywhere about it.

"That's funny," he said. "There isn't any wire here, and there has not been one since the telephone was removed, long ago."

"Let us go out on the roof and take a look down the chimney," suggested Nick.

They did that, and presently the young lineman, who had climbed to the top of the chimney, called out to them:

"There ain't any wire here, and there has not been one here for a long time, but there was once a wire down this chimney, just the same."

"How long ago?" asked Nick.

"Many moons, I should say. Not for months, at least."

"But you are sure there was one there once?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then see if you can trace out where the wire used to be. We will follow that clew."

"What good will that do, sir? You can't telephone over a rusty——"

"Do as I tell you and don't ask questions."

"Yes, sir."

The lineman's body almost disappeared inside the chimney, but after a little he emerged, covered with soot and grime.

"The wire used to run in through the bricks of the chimney, sir," he said. "I expect that it came out under the tin on the roof, and so got to the edge of the roof; but from——"

"Then we will search the edge of the roof. Come."

But the edge of the roof, in front and behind, showed no signs of a place where the wire had emerged.

"It must have run along the tops of the houses toward the street above or below us," remarked the detective. "We will search uptown first."

Twenty minutes later the lineman uttered another cry.

"Here it is," he called. "Here is where it crossed to the next house. We can trace it now, dead easy, to the end of the block at least."

Remember, it was only the place where a wire had once been laid that they were following—not the wire itself. Hence the task was infinitely more difficult.

At the end of the block they were again at fault, but it seemed only natural that the wire should have leaped from there to the adjoining houses, and accordingly they descended to the street, and presently climbed to the roofs of the next block of houses.

There, against the cornice, they discovered again the traces left by the wire, and this they followed as before, until they were nearly at the other end of the second block, and there they discovered where the mere track of the wire developed into a genuine wire.

"Now what do you make of this?" asked Nick.

"Well, sir," replied the lineman, "if my experience is worth anything at all, I should say that this here situation is a solution of the whole problem. Maybe I ain't right, and then, again, maybe I am."

"How does this solve the problem?"

"Why, sir, in this way: We know that the exchange board showed a number on the list which has been out of commission for a long time. We know that that number showed up night before last. We know that there ain't been no wire into that house where that number oughter be, for a good deal longer time than that. We know that a wire leads out of the exchange in the direction of that house, and that it stops somewhere, or is supposed to stop somewhere, only we don't know just where, and we won't know till we find it. Now, the right way to find it, any lineman

would tell you, would be to follow the line from the exchange, but I thought best to begin at the other end, and this here wire in front of us proves that I was right."

"How does it prove it?"

"This way: Maybe I'm right, and then again, maybe I ain't, but in my opinion, if you follow this here wire we have just discovered—if you follow it to the right, it will take you to a place where it connects with the end of the old wire that used to run into the house we just searched; see? And if you follow it to the left, it will take you to the room where that telephone is, or was, that we used night before last.

"You see, sir, I think it was this way. These chaps knew about that old wire. Maybe they used to live in that house in Madison Avenue; I don't know that. Now they have just utilized the old wire to make their connection; don't you see?"

"I see what you mean, all right, but I do not see the wisdom of it. Never mind that, however. You follow that wire to the right, and don't you let up on it till you know the history of it from beginning to end. When you do know it, go to my house and stay there till I come."

"Yes, sir."

"That is all you have got to do."

Neither party experienced any difficulty after that, in following the wires, the lineman toward the right, and therefore in an eastwardly direction, and Nick and the inspector to the left, and consequently westward.

There had been no attempt to disguise or hide the wire. They could readily see where it led from house to house, and across streets and avenues—as it did; and their course took them across the city to a certain part of West Forty-third Street; and there, not very far from the vicinity of Broadway, it led down into the interior of a house, through the chimney flue.

"Do you know what house this is, George?" asked Nick, smiling, well pleased.

"One of Buckram's defunct gambling houses; one of the few that is waiting patiently to be allowed to open for business."

"It is more than that," said Nick.

"Well, it is one of the houses in which Fanton is interested."

"More than that, too."

"What more?"

"It is the house where Jared Logan was murdered—the house from which he telephoned."

"Sure thing."

"Inspector."

"Well?"

"They are not expecting that anybody will try to get into that house. They are not open for business. They are receiving no guests and are not likely to do so for months to come, and hence they would be in no hurry to clean up those blood stains. In fact, I would not be surprised if they had not been touched."

"Nor I."

"There is only one way to get into that house, and that is to break in. Can we do that?"

"I'll raid it to-night if you say so."

"I do say so."

"In the meantime if you will swear out warrants for the three men you want, we may as well have them ready."

"What good will that do? We can't connect them with the crime. We cannot prove that they are the ones who did it. We cannot prove that they were here when it was done. Up to the present moment we cannot prove a thing against the men themselves. We know, in our own minds, but we can't prove it."

"That is true. How are you going to do it?"

"By the telephone."

"How do you mean by the telephone?"

"Well, I mean like this. You will find, I think, that this is no ordinary tapped wire business. This telephone wire, unless I am mistaken, has nothing whatever to do with the wire which used to be in the Madison Avenue house; it simply passes near to it; it is simply a circumstance that that old wire and this comparatively new one happens to cross somewhere, or that they run close enough together so that at a certain temperature of the weather, induction would take place, and the current would leap from one wire to the other one. You are aware of such things, of course?"

"Yes."

"Very well, when we see that lineman again, unless I am greatly mistaken he will tell you that the wire he followed runs directly to another one of the gambling houses of Bill Buckram, and you will find that this is simply a private wire between their several establishments without any connection whatever with the telephone exchanges. You see, this wire must cross that old wire somewhere, or it runs close enough so that under proper conditions induction would take place. That explains the whole matter. Now, induction, at a particular spot, time and place is one of the things which cannot be proved unless you can reproduce exactly the same conditions, and it might be a year or more before those conditions would exist again. We can't wait that long."

"Not very well; no."

"And we cannot nail our murderers without getting them into that room where the crime was committed, or, at least, inside the house; so. I'm going to get them there, and I'm going to call them there over their own telephone."

"How?"

"There must be a man in charge inside this house. We'll break in through the scuttle and capture the man. We'll make him tell all he knows by promising him immunity if he obeys, and we'll force him to bring our men to us instead of our going to them. You wait here a little."

Nick returned to the street and soon found a hardware store, where he procured the necessary tools, and in half an hour he was back again.

Then he worked quickly and silently, and in a short space of time he had the scuttle open so that they experienced no difficulty in descending into the interior of the gambling house.

The time was then shortly after noon.

When they arrrived at the second floor from the street, and were making their way cautiously along the hallway toward an open door at the back, they heard voices in conversation proceeding from the room, and Nick heard his own name mentioned.

"Who is Carter, anyway?" asked the voice of some other person who was present. "Is he any relation to Nick Carter, the detective?"

"It might be the same for all we know," said a second voice. "Anyhow, we have got to play mighty close to our bosoms through the rest of the game."

"It is Fanton and Manners," whispered Nick into the inspector's ear. "Hark!"

"Ah, what's the matter with you?" demanded a third voice. "The devil himself would never suspect that we had old Logan in this very room and bled him to death here before we put his carcass in his own office to be found there. What makes me tired is that you, Fanton, didn't get your eyes on that proxy when you left the body in the office."

"That is Crogan," whispered Nick. "Are you ready, George? There is no time like the present, you know."

"I'm ready. Go ahead."

"I shouldn't wonder if they'd show fight."

"Let them."

A moment later the three men who were seated in that back room leaped to their feet in amazement when two strangers suddenly appeared in the open door, and with revolvers aimed at their hearts, demanded that they throw up their hands.

Two of them obeyed, but Fanton leaped forward with a cry, at the same time attempting to draw his own weapon.

He made only one leap, however, for Nick Carter's pistol spoke sharply, and with a cry of pain Fanton fell back again with one arm hanging uselessly at his side.

One minute later all three men were handcuffed together so that they stood in a circle, the right hand of each fastened securely to the left hand of one of his confederates.

"We got here just in time," said Nick, genially. "The inspector and I were just discussing ways and means of enticing you here, when we discovered that you were already here. It was kind of you to save us further trouble."

He turned to the inspector then.

"Do you see?" he asked, pointing to a large blood stain on the carpet. "There is the spot where Jared Logan finally bled to death. Yonder is the couch where they put him after they brought him here, and where they left him while they went out of the room to eat their dinners. There is the trail of blood from the couch to the table; and there——"

He paused and turned to Manners.

"I see that you have taken the telephone out of the room. It would have been better if you had removed it three days ago—that is, better for you."

"But how could you have heard anything over that phone unless you were in one of our houses? The wire goes nowhere else," gasped Manners.

"It brought a message into my sleeping room that night, at least," replied Nick. "The hand of God was in it to punish you for your awful crime. Jared Logan told me the whole story over that phone while you left him here alone in this room that night. The wire crossed another somewhere, or induction took place; at all events, I heard it; and so, you see, we have traced you down."

* * * * * * *

The chief of police of Boston found and detained Thomas Babbington, and he was returned to New York to appear as a witness at the trial, for the go-between who acted in the matter of sending him away was easily traced and found; and the gamblers explained that they sent him away merely because he was the man who had, for a price, installed their private wire, and since they had heard that strange voice over their phone on the night of the murder—the voice of Babbington's daughter—they thought it as well to have him out of the country.

* * * * * * *

The report of the lineman was as Nick Carter had predicted.

The new wire and the old one did not actually cross, but they ran side by side for almost a hundred feet, and so induction had taken place exactly at the right moment to enable Nick Carter to bring the murderers of Jared Logan to justice.

THE END.

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